



# *TOWARD THE MARK*

*“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF  
THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”*

*PHILIPPIANS 3:14*

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OF ALL AGES

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Dear Reader,

“Lovest thou me?” John 21:16

This is the supreme test. It is the highest test of devotion and loyalty.

It is the supreme test of discipleship. Day by day, all down the centuries, the Lord Jesus has been drawing men and women to Himself - not by force, not by fear, but by love. The Lord was soon leaving and this was the best opportunity He would have to give last instructions and warnings, but He has no other word. Why? Because “lovest thou me?” includes all the further conditions of discipleship and will lead on to all that is needful.

It is the supreme test of conduct. No longer do we find it necessary to ask the old question regarding our attitude toward worldly things: “Is it wrong to do this? Is it a sin to do that?” Do you love Him? If so, you will want to please Him. If so, you will want to follow Him. If so, you will be fully satisfied with Him. Then the world and all its charms and empty pleasures will fail to draw you.

It is the supreme test of service. In other words, it is the incentive of “love” rather than that of “duty.” The follower of the Lord Jesus Christ serves his master because he loves Him and not because of any obligation he may wish to discharge.

Love demands love — nothing will satisfy a heart that loves except love. And so, because He Himself loves so greatly, He can be satisfied with nothing less than the love of His followers. **Hence, “lovest thou me” is the “supreme test” for every Christian.**

It is our prayer that you will find this issue good reading material for the summer months as we are dependent on Him to feed and strengthen His people. Thank you for your overwhelming response and encouragement to this exercise. Please keep us in prayers

Yours in our soon coming Lord,

*Emil S. Nashed*

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# Toward The Mark

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*Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or J.N.Darby translation.*

## MILK

*"The truth shall make you free"*

### **The New Nature and The Old**

Read Rom.7-8

Many Christians are often conscious of many conflicting desires and emotions. In thought, word, and action, they find the strangest possible jumble of good and evil which is very perplexing to them.

This is cleared up when we realize that the believer has two distinct natures, the new and the old. The new nature is the source of every right desire whereas the old is the source of only evil. A hen wouldn't know what to do if made to mother a mixed brood of chicks and ducklings because their natures and consequently their actions are very different. Many Christians are like that hen.

The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again- "born of water and of Spirit." The Lord then added, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6). The two words flesh and spirit plainly indicate the existence of two natures, each characterized by its source. The first is called flesh because it springs from the flesh. The other is called spirit because it springs from the Holy Spirit.

We can thus speak of the flesh as the old nature because we have it as the result of our birth into Adam's race. Spirit is thus the new nature which we get in new birth as born of the Holy Spirit. However, don't get spirit, our new nature, mixed up with God the Holy Spirit. The new nature, spirit, is the direct result of the Holy Spirit's wonder-working power so, although they are closely connected, the two uses of the word "spirit" are distinct.

When you were born again, the Holy Spirit implanted in you this new nature and one of the first results was a fight between it and the old nature. Both natures strive for mastery, each pulling in opposite directions. Until the secret of deliverance from the power of the flesh is learned, the painful jumble of right and wrong will continue. That painful experience is described for us in Rom. 7. Read it, especially verse 14 to 8:4. Do you see many of your own experiences there?

Paul reaches one very important conclusion in Rom. 7:18. He says "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." The flesh is completely bad. God allows us to wade through the mud of bitter experience so that we may thoroughly learn this vital lesson. The Lord Himself said "The flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). Paul again states the same thing in Rom. 8:8, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Only evil can possibly come from the flesh, our old nature.

Uncared for and untrained flesh becomes heathen and savage whereas educated and refined flesh becomes restrained, civilized and even religious but it is still flesh. That which is born of flesh is flesh, no matter what you do with it. Absolutely no good thing dwells in even high class flesh. What can be done with a nature in which sin dwells and works? What has God done with it? What is His remedy?

God answers in Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The law strongly censured the flesh but it could neither curb nor even control it so that we might be delivered from its power. But in the cross of Christ, God has judicially dealt with it. He "condemned sin in the flesh"--condemned it in the very root of its nature.

Rom. 8:4 gives the practical result of this. We have the Holy

Spirit to be the power of the new nature so as we walk in the Spirit, we fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law although we are no longer under it as our rule of life.

Even though God has condemned our old nature in the cross of Christ, what can we do with it? Well, we can thankfully accept what God has done and treat our old nature as a condemned thing! We can have absolutely "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

Do we really understand the true character of the flesh, that in it dwells no good thing and that God has condemned it? Have we reached the point where we have no confidence in it, even in its best forms? This point is not easily reached. Many painful experiences and heartbreaking failures are often passed through as again and again the flesh comes in to damage or wreck our most pious and prayerful resolutions. But once that point is reached, the major battle is just about over.

The shattering of our confidence in the flesh is largely the shattering of the flesh's power over us. This occurs when we look away from ourselves and our most earnest efforts and find a Deliverer in the Lord Jesus Christ Who has taken possession of us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power: He both checkmates the activity of the old nature (Gal. 5:16) and energizes, expands, and controls the new nature (Rom. 8: 2, 4, 5, 10) if we allow Him to do so.

It is very important to realize that the new nature has not power in itself. Rom. 7 shows us that. The new nature gives us good and beautiful thoughts and desires but is powerless to fulfill them. The power comes in complete practical submission to Christ and to the Holy Spirit! This "walking in the Spirit" largely results from our coming into real agreement with God's condemnation of the old nature in the cross of Christ.

All people, even those who are naturally good natured and even religious, need this new nature. In fact, the man to whom the Lord Jesus said “you must be born again” (John 3:7) was about as good a man as could be found. Morally, socially, and religiously, everything was in his favor yet the Lord said that he needed new birth. Good natured and religious flesh is still only flesh and it will not satisfy or please God in any way!

Thus we see that, as for as God is concerned, no one by natural birth has even a spark of good in him, For instance, in Rom. 3:9-19, we have a complete account of mankind in his moral features. In verses 10-12 we have sweeping, all-inclusive statements. Then we have the terrible details of some of these features in verses 13-18. In all these words from the God Who can not lie, there is not one word about even a spark of good in mankind because that spark is not there! Scripture is even more positive. Gen. 6:5 tells us that “God saw that wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Paul had learned this truth. IN Rom. 7:18, he said “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing”--not even one spark of good!

Remember also that every believer has both the old and the new nature. The old nature is not eradicated at new birth and it is not changed by new birth into the new nature. Both natures are in every believer. The process of “grafting” illustrates this. A choice, good and cultivated apple-shoot can be grafted into a wild, useless tree and the tree then can yield good fruit and is in fact then known by the apple-variety that was grafted in. The same is true with us. Both natures are there but God only recognizes the new one so we are “not in flesh but in the (Holy) Spirit” (Rom. 8:9).

Further remember that no amount of human effort will avail against our old nature. To have victory over it, we have to think

of it and treat it as God does. God entitles you to disown the old nature because the new nature is your true self once you are saved just as the cultivated apple is the recognized nature of the tree as soon as the graft is effective. Your treatment of the old nature is simple. In grafting, the gardener carefully watches his tree if he wants good fruit from it. If the old wild stock seeks to assert itself by throwing up suckers from its roots, the gardener ruthlessly cuts them down as soon as they appear. Likewise, we must quickly and ruthlessly bring the cross of Christ to bear like a sharp knife on our old nature and all of its sinful desires.

Col. 3:5 tells us to “mortify (make dead) your members which are upon earth”-- cut down the wild suckers. These “suckers” are detailed for us in v. 5, 8, and 9. We are to put them to death in detail. This takes spiritual energy, courage, and purpose-of-heart which you can only have when you willingly look only to the Lord Jesus and place yourself fully in the hands of the Holy Spirit. “If you through the (Holy) Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live” (Rom. 8:13). (Of course, this does not speak of physical damage to your physical body but through the Holy Spirit's help, you consider your body as dead to the deeds of the old nature. We see this in Paul's statement in 1Cor. 9:27, Ed.).

Thus the Holy Spirit's power is obtained only when we “yield ourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and our member as instruments of the righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13). Romans 6:19 says to “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” See also Rom. 6:22. The thought that such power is obtained by some act of our own will (other than to yield that will to God) is a last desperate attempt to somehow obtain a little bit of credit for the flesh instead of totally condemning it all and giving all the glory for victory to God.

The new nature never reaches such perfect growth on earth that

a believer will never again sin. An example of this fact is given in 2 Cor. 12:1-10. Paul had been especially blessed by being caught up into the third heaven, into the presence of God. He had seen and heard things that no human language could describe. Then Paul had to resume his ordinary life on earth. From then on, God gave him a “thorn in the flesh”--some infirmity-- so that he wouldn't be exalted above measure i.e., think to highly of himself because he had been specially privileged. Paul's Christian living was very godly and advanced but all that was absolutely no insurance against the pride and self-glory which is inherent to the old nature. If Paul was not immune, neither are we.

In closing, let's see how we can distinguish between the desires which come from the old nature and from the new nature. There is no all-inclusive, easy rule. We must continually use the Word of God which is “living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Then the throne of grace is always available by prayer so that we may “find grace for seasonable help” (Heb. 4:16 R.V.). Thus bible study and earnest, exercised prayer are absolutely necessary to enable us to untangle and distinguish the thoughts and desires which we find within us!

However, we can give one general rule. The new nature is always true to God and old nature is always true to self. All that has Christ as its object is of the new nature whereas all that has self as its object is of the old nature. Thus, many perplexing questions and problems would be solved by honestly asking “What is the real (secret) motive which makes me want to do or not to do this or that? Is it for Christ-glorification or for self-gratification?”

**F.B.Hole**

## Meat

*“Sanctify them by the truth...”*

### THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

OR

### THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

#### **“Works” or “Fruit” (Gal. 5:19-23)**

Before getting into a more detailed study of the different features let us observe some general differences. Those features mentioned in vv. 19-21 are called “works” and the term is plural. That speaks of the diversity of activities originating in man's sinful nature. The awful list ends with “and things like these” pointing out that this is not a complete list of activities of the flesh, but rather a representative one. There are other lists of this kind in Scripture (see for example Mt. 15:19; Rom 1:29).

The features worked out by the Spirit in the life of a believer (vv. 22-23) are called “fruit”. These things are not so much activities but attitudes “growing” in our hearts and lives and thus influencing all our actions. The term “fruit” is singular – it is actually **one** fruit, a ninefold fruit so to say. The Spirit wants to work out in our lives not only one or two of these features, but all of them together form “the fruit of the Spirit.” It could be likened to a beautiful flower: if one or two of the petals are pulled off, the beauty of the flower is destroyed.

#### **The Works of the Flesh**

The list of the works of the flesh is a dark picture and one would rather like to turn to other more pleasant subjects of study, but God hasn't put these things into His word so that we may ignore them. These things are written for our warning showing us the dreadful result of a life that “fulfils the lust of the flesh.”

The representative list could be divided in certain groups: the first three (fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness) are sexual sins, the next two (idolatry, sorcery) are the religious sins of heathendom. This is followed by a long list of sins against my neighbour and concluded by two sins showing a lack of moderation (drunkenness, revels)

- **fornication** – this is something that in most of our permissive western societies is no longer considered a sin by men in general. But God’s moral standards are unchanging and the Christian will live by God’s standards even if his lifestyle differs from his fellowmen around him. He knows that God’s standards are the sure and only way to lasting happiness. In the eyes of God every sexual intercourse with any person that is not your marriage partner is fornication. That which God has given for the enjoyment of husband and wife becomes sin when taken out of the God-given context, and it will – whatever the media is going to tell you – finally cause sorrow and not joy.
- **uncleanness** – that this term is also connected with the area of sexual sins may be seen from Rev. 17:4, where both terms are connected: “having a golden cup in her hand full of...the unclean things of her fornication.” Besides the actual act of fornication, there is a lot of moral filthiness that our flesh likes to be occupied with. The media, printed and otherwise, are full of such things. May we ask the Lord for His help to stay clean in all we do and think. “Wherewithal shall a young man (or a young woman) cleanse his path? by taking heed according to thy word” (Ps. 119:9)
- **licentiousness** – There is a distinct climax in the order of these three terms: first a specific sin (fornication), then a general condition of impurity of mind (uncleanness), and finally an insolent disregard of decency (licentiousness). These three words are also found together in 2 Cor. 12:21.
- **idolatry** – idolatry was the practice from which the majority of the Galatian believers had been saved. So Paul warns them not to turn back to customs and habits that had characterised their lives before their conversion. Those idolatrous practices and religions are increasingly invading our societies. And generally speaking, the advice of the apostle John is very needed for every believer: “Children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 Jn. 5:21).
- **sorcery** – the Greek word is *pharmakia*, from which the English word ‘pharmacy’ is derived. Among pagan

peoples the use of certain drugs is usually accompanied by an appeal to occult powers. Examples of such sorcery are found in Scripture: in Ex. 7:11 (Egypt); Isa. 47:9-12 (Babylon); Acts 19:19 (Ephesus). The ‘medicine’ practised in modern day Africa, spiritism, and a lot of so called ‘alternative’ medicine in our civilised countries is not much different from that. The last two words describe sins in the religious sphere. The first (idolatry) perhaps practised more in the open, the second (sorcery) more in secret. All those works of the flesh mentioned so far were associated with pagan religious cults. The end of those living in these things is the second death: Rev. 21:8.

- **hatred** – (enmities) This describes a condition that is characterised by the opposite of love. Either in relation to God (“Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.” Rom. 8:7) or in relation to man (“And Pilate and Herod became friends with one another the same day, for they had been at enmity before between themselves.” Luke 23:12). Here the apostle has the mutual animosities of men in mind, which Paul describes in his letter to Titus with “hateful, and hating one another.” (3:3)
- **strifes** –
- **jealousies** – from the Greek *zelos* words like ‘zeal’ or ‘zealous’ are derived. The word is used both in a positive and negative sense in Scripture. Positive examples are: Jn. 2:17 (The Lord’s zeal) or 2 Cor. 11:2 (Paul’s zeal). But here the term is used in a wholly bad sense. The origin of this jealousy is not love but enmity. How easily we are jealous of somebody because of something he or she has got or done (material possessions, abilities, success). There is also a kind of spiritual jealousy, which is even worse, when I become jealous of something the Lord has given a brother or sister.
- **angers** – (wrath, indignation) In Revelation used seven times for the wrath of God, but elsewhere it is used nearly always in a bad sense. If we don’t judge the jealousy in our heart it will finally break out in anger or wrath
- **contentions** – factions, party-making. That is taking sides for or against party leaders. In Ja. 3:14-16 it is associated

with jealousy. We could say jealousy is the root from which wrath and contentions are the fruit.

- **disputes** – divisions. Party making is bound to result in divisions. The believer should not only beware of causing divisions but also be on his guard against those who cause divisions and turn away from them. (“But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt, and turn away from them.” Rom. 16:17).
- **schools of opinions** – heresies, sects. A division is the initial stage of a sect, a sect is a matured and established state of things. Sectarianism is the climax resulting from a development that originated in enmity. The advance in these seven words is readily discernible.
- **envyings** – envy is very close to jealousy. The difference may be described as follows: envy desires to deprive another of what he has, whereas jealousy desires as well to have the same for itself. Envy is “as the rottenness of the bones” (Pro. 14:30).
- **drunkenness** – excessive indulgence in strong drink
- **revels** – a common consequence of drunkenness, also mentioned together in 1 Pe. 4:3.

“That they who do such things shall not inherit God’s kingdom” (v. 31). They that do such things means those who live habitually in such things, who are characterised by such things. Paul uses a similar expression in Col. 3:7, “In which ye also once walked when ye lived in these things.” For the Colossian saints this was past; “once” they had lived in these, but now a change had taken place, similar to those in the lives of the Corinthian believers: “And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

### **The Fruit of the Spirit**

As the flesh manifests itself in works, so the Spirit manifests Himself in His fruit. “Works” gives prominence to the idea of activity; “fruit” speaks of the power that works within – the energy of the Holy Spirit operating in the believer.

As pointed out at the beginning of this article the singular form “fruit” suggests unity and harmony. A unity and harmony that was perfectly seen in the Lord Jesus and that should be reproduced in His own by the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is – in Christ *actually*, in the Christian *potentially* – a harmonious fruit, the different elements being mutually consistent.

### **Unfruitful**

The opposite of bearing fruit is also mentioned in Scripture: being unfruitful. We just mention the different passages for further personal study:

- “and he becomes unfruitful” (Mt. 13:22 – the one sown among the thorns)
- “to be neither idle nor unfruitful” (2 Pe. 1:8 – if the things mentioned in the previous verses are missing)
- “without fruit” (Jude 12 – the ungodly)
- “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11)
- “that they may not be unfruitful” (Tit. 3:14 – the believers)
- “my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Cor. 14:14 – though spirit and tongue may be active in prayer, it is unfruitful or of no profit if the understanding is not engaged also).

### **Love, Joy, Peace**

The first three features of the fruit of the Spirit have something in common which is very beautiful. The Lord mentions all of them and calls them “my....

- “abide in **my love**” (Jn. 15:9)
- “that **my joy** may be in you” (Jn. 15:11)
- “**my peace** I give unto you” (Jn. 14:27)

While all of the nine features are part of the fruit of the Spirit and therefore find their origin in a work of the Spirit of God, love and joy are connected with the Spirit of God in another passage of Scripture as well.

- “But I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by **the love of the Spirit**, that ye strive together with me in prayers for me to God” (Rom. 15:30)
- “And the disciples were filled with **joy and (the) Holy Spirit**” (Acts 13:52)



**Long-suffering:** this is the attitude of spirit and soul that perseveres without murmuring in all the different troubles and burdens of a Christian's life.

**Kindness** (gentleness): this has been called "goodness in action," goodness that expresses itself in deeds of grace, compassion and tenderness. It is said of God that He is rich in goodness (Rom. 2:4); a goodness that appeared in the gift of His Son (Tit. 3:4)

**Goodness:** this is a synonym of the preceding one. It has similar meaning, but not exactly the same. What's the difference? Some have suggested that this word includes the sterner qualities of goodness, i.e., doing good to others, but not necessarily by gentle means. In Trench's book on Synonyms, he uses the Lord driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple as an illustration.

**Fidelity** (faith, faithfulness): What a beautiful feature in a person – faithfulness. The slaves should be encouraged to show "all good fidelity" to their masters by this adorning the doctrine of our Saviour God (Tit. 2:10). Again this is something found in God Himself (Rom. 3:3).

**Meekness:** In everyday language meekness may rhyme with weakness. Not so in biblical usage! The common idea is that if a man is meek, he cannot help himself. What a difference to our Lord who was "meek at heart" (Mt. 11:20-30). He was meek and had all the infinite resources of God at His command. The believer is to cultivate the same quality in his life and particularly in his service (1 Cor. 4:21, 2 Tim. 2:25).

**Self-control** (temperance): How important self-control is in a world where man is taught the opposite. Walking through this world completely in control of yourself will enable you to triumph where others will fall. As someone has said: self-control spells victory.

"Against such there is no law" – no law forbids showing this fruit of the Spirit in your life. On the contrary: when you and I are characterised by these features our Lord will be glorified.

**Why not taking up your Bible and concordance and start a word study on these nine important features. You will certainly be rewarded.**

Michael Vogelsang

## Exercise

*"Exercise thyself unto piety"*

### DEFEATED OR CONQUERER?

**The power of sin within us is far too strong for any of us to conquer. Of course, unbelievers give way continually to this cruel enemy of souls. They are slaves of sin, and generally prefer it this way. They are not responsible for having that sinful nature; it has been inherited from Adam. But they are responsible for allowing it to express itself by sinning. Every soul under heaven is personally responsible for his own sins, and God allows no excuses or shadow of justification for this. Yet it is the most common deceit of men's hearts to blame anything or anyone else for the wrong he himself has done. This is one of the repulsive characteristics of that sinful nature. Such a dishonest cover-up is the very reason that souls find no deliverance from sin.**

First, one must face his sins as his own personal guilt, if he is to find forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

**It is this guilt we must have removed first, before ever we can even understand how God deals with our sinful nature. For the sinful nature is not our responsibility, but our guilt is; that is, guilt on account of the sinful acts we have committed, and which only the blood of Christ, shed on Calvary, is sufficient to remove, before God. Personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great sacrifice for our sins, is the absolute requisite for this forgiveness and justification. For God offers this "to all," but it is applicable only to "all them that believe" on His Son (Rom. 3:22).**

But it is fully possible that this forgiveness may be known, with its accompanying genuine faith and thanksgiving to God, and yet the believer in experience find deep distress and perplexity in realizing that still within him is that hateful sinful nature that springs into activity on the slightest occasion, influenced greatly by temptation, so that too often the believer gives way and finds himself defeated and miserable. Romans 6 and 7 deal especially with this question. For God knows well what the soul goes through, and has made perfect provision to meet it. Let us then honestly desire to know his answer,

and learn it well from His word. We note here a few outstanding points for serious consideration:

1. Recognize this dread principle “sin” as an enemy. To the unbeliever, sin is his master; but sin has no dominion over the believer, who is under grace (Rom. 6:15). Christ is the Master of the believer, and sin is his vicious enemy, attempting to defeat and destroy him. Nor is it a virtue to underestimate the power of an enemy. His power is dreadfully great; but our Master is infinitely greater. These two points should be deeply impressed upon us.
2. Take sides fully with your true Master against the sin which is both His enemy and yours. This means you must not excuse yourself in the least degree for giving way to sin, nor blame it on anything or anyone else; but blame yourself fully for it. Let it be stressed that this is a vitally important matter, for far too many defeat themselves by not honestly taking the full blame for their failures. Notice Rom. 6:21, and compare Job 33:27-28.
3. Reckon (or count) yourself dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:11). We have full title to do this because God counts the death of Christ as our death; it is an absolute, established fact in God’s eyes, that believers “have died with Christ” (Rom. 6:8), and therefore have died to sin (v. 2). If sin therefore presents its subtle temptation to your mind, it is right for you to respond, “No: I have died to that.” You are rather alive to God now: it is in Him your true life is, not in sin.
4. Yield yourself to God as one who is alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13). It is not your determination that will keep you from sin, but submitting to the only one who is able to keep you from it. Remember, having died with Christ, you are now alive from the dead, on the other side of death, where Christ is in the glory of God. Your life is there. If you have not before gotten into the presence of God to take the deliberate step of yielding yourself to Him, then do so without delay. There is certainly no power for you anywhere else.
5. Yield your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Rom. 6:13). To yield ourselves is first: this should be done once for all. But members speak of the details of our life: our mind (what we think), our eyes (what we see), our ears (what we

hear), lips (what we say), hands (what we do), feet (where we go), etc. The first three of these are passive, but they are deeply basic to all that comes from us. “Set your mind on things above” (Col. 3:2), where our life is. If our thoughts are on profitable things (Phil. 4:8) this will greatly influence our actions. As to seeing and hearing, we must constantly be on our guard. Lot, in seeing and hearing, was vexed in his soul from day to day by the filthy conversation of the wicked (2 Pe. 2:7,8). If we make provision for the flesh in the way he did, by friendships with the ungodly, or even by television or radio allowing evil conversation to enter our homes, we cannot but be affected by it. Let our eyes behold rather the purely satisfying beauty of the Lord Jesus, and our ears drink in His precious word.

**All of these details we are to be concerned to have yielded to God day by day. This means constant exercise in communion with Him, both in meditation on His word and in prayer, along with the self-judgment that this will rightly produce.**

But chapter 7 shows that one may desire all this honestly, and yet lack the liberty of true deliverance, because his eyes are on his own efforts to maintain a proper standard, that is, in the case considered there, a standard of law-keeping. But we must realize that we are just as dead to law as we are to sin. Law can be no standard for the one redeemed by the blood of Christ. In this we must learn that the law of the Spirit, which is that of life in Christ Jesus, has made us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). The Spirit of God in the believer is new ruling principle in precious liberty.

**And added to this is the fact that Christ Himself is the standard of the believer, Christ his Object (8:3,4), to engage his heart and his mind, so that he is entitled to look altogether outside of himself and his own sinful heart, to find perfect rest in contemplating the beauty and perfection of the Son of God. Christ has done what the law could not do, and what we could not do. We rest in this, and trust Him simply for everything. Our old sinful nature does not change, but we have title to forget it, and turn thoroughly from it, in appreciation of One who is supreme above it, and sufficient to fill our hearts with praise for eternity.**

**We need Him for every step of the way: we need His Spirit: we need His word: for we have no strength, and no protection in ourselves. But there is in Him perfection of sufficiency; and as we enjoy Him we shall prosper and bear fruit. This is true liberty, true peace, true rejoicing. Let no believer settle for anything less.**

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Sins are no longer my burden,	(Romans 1 to 5:11)
Adam no longer my head;	(Romans 5:12 to 21)
Sin nevermore is my master,	(Romans 6)
And to the law's claims I am dead.	(Romans 7, 8)
Now Christ is my heart's blessed Burden,	(Romans 5:1-11)
And Christ my undying Head,	(Romans 5:12-21)
My merciful, grace-giving Master;	(Romans 6)
While, for fruit, by His Spirit I'm led.	(Romans 7, 8)

**L. M. Grant**

Continued from page 16

**Even phraseology is used at times which is far removed from "words...which the Holy Spirit teacheth", I Corinthians 2:13. Indeed, a careful study of this chapter would free us from attempting to imitate the supposed wise men of this world.**

Those who attempt to introduce such things into divine teaching only betray the fact that they are better acquainted with human theories than with the Word of God. Doubts in regard to the original creation are at times expressed in the very teeth of Holy Scripture. Are we going to desire to know the one true God or His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ? All the hypothetical guess work regarding the creation, etc., will be at once rejected by those who believe the record which God Himself has given us. One verse of Scripture from among many demolished these baseless theories for anyone subject to the Word of God. "for in six days the Lord made heavens and earth", Exodus 20:11.

**Whether from the religious world or from the "so-called" scientific world, wisdom would warn us avoid speculations which have sprung from the minds of those who, like Saul, are marked by disobedience, on the one hand, and willfulness on the other. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown", Revelation 3:11**

**George Davison**

Conformed or Transformed!

## **"LIKE ALL THE NATIONS"**

What a sad day had dawned in Israel when they came to the prophet Samuel with his request. Externally they complained of the misrule of the sons of Samuel, but when the prophet mournful told God of this request, He told Samuel where the real trouble was lying – it was in their hearts. They were feeling the rule of God to be irksome as he said to Samuel, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them", 1Samuel 8:5-7. Had they but asked for a king like Moses ("and he was king in Jeshurun") no doubt God would have been pleased with this **but no – "like all nations" was what they desired.** Long afterwards we read "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath", Hosea 13:11.

When Samuel, as instructed by God, rehearsed to them the features of the king they desired, he solemnly portrayed the character of the man who would rule over them. **Self would be his most obvious characteristic.**

"He will take" is six times repeated in verses 11-17 – and what he took was for himself. Truly he would be like the kings of the nations, more inclined to rob them of the blessings which God had bestowed upon them and add to them. We have not to read far into the history of Saul, ere we learn that he was guilty both of disobedience and of willfulness. What else would sinful man do if disobedient to the voice of God than act according to his own will?

**Is there not in all this a warning voice for us today when there seems to be an increasing desire to be like "all the nations", be it politically, religiously, or otherwise? Just as Israel had forgotten that they had been set apart from the other nations as the people of God, so may we be inclined to forget in our day the unique place God has brought us into under the Lordship and Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ? That which distinguished Israel was the light and the Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ? That which distinguished Israel was the light and knowledge they had of the one true God; so have we been even more greatly blessed today! Why then should we have any desire to be like those who have no true knowledge of God? Neither have they any appreciation of the assembly as the vessel controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. Rather let us be thankful that we have been delivered from many elements which have no authority in the Word of God.**

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## REST

*"Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?"*

## **GOD'S BEST – CHOOSING A MARRIAGE PARTNER**

### **PART 3**

*In these articles we would like to show to all who are unmarried that there is a better way than the world would teach to find a marriage partner. 'God's way' is the way of true blessing*

#### **OUR RESPONSIBILITY**

We have spoken about God's leading to the right partner for us if it is His will, but there is also another aspect to consider: our responsibility to act according to the Scriptures and with wisdom.

Prayer for wisdom and direction is as essential in this area as it is in every other aspect of our lives. There have been many that have made mistakes: remember Samson and Delilah; Esau and the daughters of Heth; Solomon and his many wives; Ahab and Jezebel.

The Scripture is clear that it is quite wrong for a Christian to marry an unbeliever: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14) - and of course this must apply to courtship as well. We may think we can bring good out of our wrong action, but let us not be deceived; this has been the downfall of many young and older Christians. If all we are looking for is the physical and natural aspects of marriage we may be misguided into thinking that a non-Christian can provide this. Remember there is no true happiness and joy without Christ being the centre and He cannot bless us if we are disobedient. (This does not, of course, disallow His grace and forgiveness with us, but remember marriage is for life and a wrong step taken here is taken for life.)

There is only one nature that we share with an unbeliever, and that is the old fallen nature that we inherited from Adam. The new nature which appreciates the divine truths that we possess as 'born of God,' is unknown to an unbeliever. A Christian should be living in view of the world to come. An unbeliever has no hope for the future and lives wholly for this life and for self.

If the Lord is going to use us together as a family unit we need to be committed to Him. It is not sufficient to choose a partner who just says they are a Christian because: firstly they may prove to be otherwise, and secondly if they are converted but not committed to the Lord they will always be looking back to the world's things. Remember Lot's wife. In the same way, if I am not committed to the Lord I cannot think of myself as a suitable partner for another.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed." Amos 3:3.

How do we see someone else's commitment to the Lord? If we are involved in the Lord's work in whatever capacity our abilities allow, we will meet others who are like minded and this commitment to serve the Lord will flow into our marriage. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that an attraction to someone is sufficient and assume that other difficulties will be overcome after we are married.

Serving the Lord with your spouse must mean having the same exercise as to the place to enjoy the privileges of Christian fellowship, and being committed to the gathering together of the Lord's people as seen in the Scriptures. Then together you can serve the Lord and bring up children with the same conviction and not be divided, so that one goes to one 'type of church' and the other to another with the conflicting loyalties this brings when children come along.

We should ask ourselves the question - Are we ready to make a decision as to who to marry and to begin to take on the responsibility of a new family unit before facing the Lord's request to be baptised and remember Him in the Breaking of Bread and drinking the cup? The Lord has the first claim to our love, obedience and devotion. We cannot say we are spiritually mature unless we have responded to His request. Lu. 22:19, "This do in remembrance of me"!

Physical attraction makes up part of the bond we have with our partner but this must not take priority over the spiritual and mental aspects of our relationship. The world around us makes almost everything of the physical and we must guard against this playing too great a part in our choice of partner. The world is led on by Satan who is against the idea of marriage as instituted by God. If we allow ourselves to be exposed to the media's perceptions of relationships they can unconsciously enter our minds and affect our actions. Let us guard ourselves from songs, films, books, plays, etc., that entertain

low morals or overplay the physical and emotion aspect of choosing a partner.

As I said at the beginning, pray. Earnest prayer is vital, we must be guided by the Lord in these things - but even in this there is a danger. How often has someone starting down a foolish road quickly justified himself or herself by saying, 'but I have prayed a lot about it.' We must realise that the flesh is weak, and it is so easy to persuade ourselves that the Lord is sanctioning our actions because we want it that way when we have already committed ourselves to our own will. Patience is a safeguard while we pray. Wait patiently upon Him. "For all seek their own not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21).

Do we have ambitions for a family life that is based on the world's aims of materialism? Are we seeking a marriage in which to settle into a comfortable existence? If we are truly committed to the Lord we shall be willing to serve Him together in whatever circumstances He places us, whether humble or exalted, rich or poor. "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

We will do well to take account of advice given by godly and experienced believers and parents. We must remember that they have a responsibility to help us through difficult decisions. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. 13:7).

## **ENGAGEMENT**

The Scripture does not say much about engagement but it does refer in several places to betrothal or espousal. This is shown in the case of Mary and Joseph and mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Engagement is a time when a man and woman are preparing for a marriage to which they have committed themselves.

As we have already seen, Scripture clearly speaks about the relationship between one man and one woman. Engagement should therefore be seen as a serious step of firm commitment to marry (having received clear guidance from the Lord in the decision) and not as a trial period. I would hasten to say that should a mistake be realised before one is married it would be far better to admit it and end the relationship than to continue in a path which is not the Lord's will.

Engagement is a time to prepare yourselves for a new life and attend to the many practical matters that need to be sorted out: a wedding to prepare; a new home to find; and studies to complete, for example.

First and foremost, however, the engagement period should be used to grow closer together spiritually, mentally and physically (with self-control).

The length of an engagement will vary according to different circumstances. If there is a clear knowledge of the Lord's will and there is no reason to delay, it could be frustrating to wait too long before the full enjoyment of living and working together can be enjoyed; especially if the couple are in the same town and see each other often. This, of course, is only my personal view.

Engagement should be used to get to know each other by talking over different matters, praying together, and reading God's word. Habits formed at this stage will provide a foundation for married life. In discussing all the many practical aspects of our lives in an attitude of dependence to our Lord and commitment to Him, He will guide our thoughts together and set our aim to serve Him. It is natural to want to spend as much time as possible in each other's company, but let us ensure that we make time for our responsibility to serve the Lord together in our local assembly or wherever He leads. These are all foundations for a spiritual marriage. If we use this time well it will be something to remember with pleasure.

There will also be the opportunity to get to know each other physically. This is once again an area that needs prayerful consideration. It is normal for there to be a display of affection between two who have committed themselves to each other; yet there is need for self-control and restraint. As in all the other areas we have discussed we should seek to honour the Lord and so live for His glory. Let us be wise in these matters and seek guidance to act in a manner that does not embarrass others or give a bad testimony. We must leave until marriage that freedom to enjoy all the privileges of physical closeness and union; we are forbidden to have intercourse outside of marriage and must not allow our physical emotions to control us. Such actions as staying unaccompanied in the same house should be avoided as they could lead to temptation and suspicion. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thes. 5:22.

**Brian Warnes**

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q:** Since the Bible states that the Lord shall not come until that son of perdition (the antichrist) is revealed, will Christians be on earth with the antichrist or not? (from the questions box of YP conference)

**A:** We understand from the scriptures that different individuals will be revealed during the tribulation who will oppose God and His people — particularly this lawless man (2 Th. 2:8) known as the antichrist.

Although in 1 Jn. 2:18, the apostle speaks of many antichrists - those that deny the Lord Jesus Christ came in flesh (see also 2 Jn. 7) - this one exceeds them all by sitting down “in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Th. 2:4).

**As for us Christians, we will not be in the scene when he acts in such a lawless way (see 1 Th. 1:10 and Rev. 3:10).**

We might be still on earth while he is being prepared. **Let us be very clear that all Christians will be taken up away from earth when the Lord Jesus comes for us (see 1Th.4:16, 17). No Christian will be left behind to go through the tribulation 1Th.1:10.**

After that the Antichrist will be revealed for the scene of tribulation. 2Th.2:3-12

Yours in Him,  
**J.A**

## A Song for the Wilderness

This world is a wilderness wide;  
I have nothing to seek nor to choose;  
I've no thought in the waste to abide;  
I've nought to regret nor to lose.

The Lord is Himself gone before;  
He has marked out the path that I tread;  
It's as sure as the love I adore;  
I have nothing to fear or to dread.

There is but that one in the waste,  
Which His footsteps have marked as His own;  
And I follow in diligent haste  
To the seats where He's put on His crown.

For the path where my Savior is gone  
Has led up to His Father and God,  
To the place where He's now on the throne;  
And His strength shall be mine on the road.

And with Him shall my rest be on high,  
When in holiness bright I sit down,  
In the joy of His love ever nigh,  
In the peace that His presence shall crown.

'Tis the treasure I've found in His love  
That has made me a pilgrim below;  
And 'tis there, when I reach Him above,  
As I'm known, all His fullness I'll know.

And, Saviour! 'tis Thee from on high  
I await till the time Thou shalt come,  
To take him Thou hast led by Thine eye  
To Thyself in Thy heavenly home.

Till then, 'tis the path Thou hast trod  
My delight and my comfort shall be;  
I'm content with Thy staff and Thy rod,  
Till with Thee all Thy glory I see.

## WHEN A FISH "CAUGHT A MAN"

One day a man traveling on a train began to discuss the Bible with a Christian seated next to him. "If you can prove to me that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, I'll believe all the rest of the Bible," he said. "What do you think of Christ?" asked his companion. Surprised by the strange rejoinder, the first man exclaimed, "That's beside the point." "Oh no, it's not," replied the other. "Tell me, do you think Christ was wise?" "Yes," he said, "I think He was the wisest Man who ever lived." "Well, He believed what you call 'a fish story,' for see what He said in Matthew 12:40." The unbeliever was amazed to find that the passage read, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." "You see," said the Christian, "Jesus believed the account of Jonah!" "Thanks, Mister," was the reply. "That's proof enough for me!"

Some people say there isn't a creature in the sea that is capable of performing such a great feat. Scientists know better. For instance, in 1912 Captain Charles Thompson harpooned a huge mammal off the coast of Florida which, when it was brought to land, was found to contain another 1500-pound fish that had been devoured whole. Those who examined Thompson's catch said it could have swallowed twenty average-size men!

To avoid Jonah's difficulties, stay in the will of God.

Out of the will of God there can be no success; in the will of god there can be no failure.